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RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS PRIORITY 5973
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 2797
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RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME PRIORITY 7217
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH PRIORITY 2176
RUEHTU/AMEMBASSY TUNIS PRIORITY 6218
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 8256
RUEHJI/AMCONSUL JEDDAH PRIORITY 1046
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM PRIORITY 1622
RHMFISS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
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RHMFIUU/COMSIXTHFLT PRIORITY

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STATE FOR NEA, NEA/IPA, NEA/PPD

WHITE HOUSE FOR PRESS OFFICE, SIT ROOM
NSC FOR NEA STAFF

SECDEF WASHDC FOR USDP/ASD-PA/ASD-ISA
HQ USAF FOR X0XX
DA WASHDC FOR SASA
JOINT STAFF WASHDC FOR PA
CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL FOR POLAD/USIA ADVISOR
COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE FOR PAO/POLAD
COMSIXTHFLT FOR 019

JERUSALEM ALSO ICD
LONDON ALSO FOR HKANONA AND POL
PARIS ALSO FOR POL
ROME FOR MFO

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E.O. 12958: N/A
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SUBJECT: ISRAEL MEDIA REACTION

SUBJECTS COVERED IN THIS REPORT:

- [1](#)1. Mideast
- [1](#)2. Iran
- [1](#)3. Muslims in European Society

Key stories in the media:

The Jerusalem Post quoted former Israeli ambassador to the UN Dore

Gold, one of PM-designate Benjamin Netanyahu's top foreign policy advisers, as saying yesterday that Netanyahu has no intention of sidelining the Palestinian track in favor of a Syrian one.

All media highlighted the role of Gilad Shalit's family in efforts to secure his release. DM Ehud Barak and relatives of MIA or killed IDF soldiers visited them yesterday. The media quoted the Kuwaiti daily Al-Jarida as saying that, during his visit to Gaza, Deputy Hamas leader Moussa Abu Marzouk allegedly received a videotape of Shalit and a letter hand-written by him. The media quoted Gilad Shalit's father Noam as saying that his family has not received information about this development.

The media reported that yesterday Netanyahu tried to head off a revolt within his party, as his fellow Likud members complained that he is breaking promises by giving away senior cabinet posts to coalition partners. HaQaretz reported that he told Likud Knesset members that the Qcoalition talks have not ended. They are at their apex, in terms of both principles and portfolios." HaQaretz quoted Netanyahu's aides as saying that he hopes to present his new cabinet next Wednesday or Thursday, and that he fears that his faction may rebel. Since the narrow right-wing government will lean on a coalition of 61-65 MKs, internal opposition could topple it. Meanwhile, Yisrael Beiteinu's leader MK Avigdor Lieberman is adamant in demanding that Daniel Friedmann be kept as justice minister and that his party chair the Knesset Constitution Committee. Israel Radio reported that Netanyahu wants to reach an agreement with Lieberman according to which Yisrael Beiteinu would be entrusted with the justice portfolio, but that it would not be in Friedmann's hands. HaQaretz reported that the police will summon Lieberman for an investigation next week. The media reported that yesterday the Likud's Knesset faction nominated Likud MK Reuven QRuby Q Rivlin to be Knesset Speaker, a post he held from 2003 until 2006.

HaQaretz quoted Hizbullah Deputy leader Sheikh Naim Qassem as saying yesterday that there is little prospect of another conflict with Israel in the short term. But "in the distant future all things are possible," he warned.

HaQaretz quoted Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad as saying that hostile unmanned aerial vehicles overflew Iran last month and disrupted the communications systems at the launch site of a missile carrying Iran's first satellite to space. The newspaper reported that Meir Jabandafar, an expert on Iran, told HaQaretz on Monday that Israel is presumed to be the No. 1 suspect for this operation. "The intelligence war against Iran is intensifying and becoming more public. It seems that the aim is not only to foil Iran's military developments but also to embarrass the leadership and put pressure on it. This may be an important tool for Ahmadinejad in the coming presidential elections," Jabandafar was quoted as saying.

HaQaretz reported that the recent refusal to grant construction permits to the residents of Jerusalem's Bustan quarter (in the village of Silwan) could lead to violent reactions similar to those caused by the excavation of the Western Wall Tunnel in 1996.

Yediot cited the assessment of senior diplomatic sources in Jerusalem that Denmark, the Netherlands, Belgium, the Czech Republic, and Australia will boycott the Durban 2 conference.

The Jerusalem Post reported that yesterday the left-wing group Yesh Din filed a petition with the High Court of Justice claiming that Israel's practice of transferring 75% of the rock and gravel it mines in the West Bank into areas within the Green Line is illegal.

The Jerusalem Post reported that Yad Vashem, the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and Bethlehem will be among the sites that Pope Benedict XVI will visit in May. HaQaretz reported that yesterday, in conjunction with the Vatican, Yad Vashem began a seminar on the role of Pope Pius XII during the Holocaust.

Citing the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, The Jerusalem Post reported on local attempts at Muslim-Jewish dialogue in Paris.

HaQaretz reported that the Governor of the Bank of Israel, Stanley Fischer, will recommend a stimulus package that seeks to stem the effects of long-term unemployment and recession, in a presentation scheduled to take place in Jerusalem.

HaQaretz reported that, in a report delivered to Minister Benjamin Ben-Eliezer, the Gas Authority at the Ministry of National Infrastructure recommended that the state should abandon its intention to publish a tender for the construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) storage facility. The Authority said that the state should rely on reaching a comprehensive deal regarding both the offshore field Tamar-1, found near Haifa, and the Tethys Sea field off Ashkelon.

Citing the Jewish Telegraphic Agency, The Jerusalem Post reported that several U.S. Jewish groups applauded President Obama's decision to lift the executive order restricting federal funding for embryonic stem cell research.

The Jerusalem Post cited the results of a poll conducted last weekend by the West Bank-based Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research: If elections were held today in the West Bank and Gaza, Hamas PM Ismail Haniyeh would defeat PA President Mahmoud Abbas, but Marwan Barghouti would beat Haniyeh. The survey also showed that Hamas's popularity among Palestinians had increased in the aftermath of Operation Cast Lead.

1. Mideast:

Summary:

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz: QIsrael must decide whether to accept the [Palestinian prisoners] list, but as things stand now, it doesn't seem to intend even to discuss it.

Former Meretz leader Dr. Yossi Beilin wrote in the independent Israel Hayom: QFayyad is one of the only people who knew what to ask of Israel and of the world, and how to get it.... It is not only the Palestinians who will pay the price for his leaving.

Liberal columnist Prof. Aviad Kleinberg wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot: QThe true makeover of the recent elections was not the rise of the Right, but the Israeli middle class's turning away from the parties that represented it over the past decades -Q Labor and Meretz.

Block Quotes:

I. "Fading by the Day"

Military correspondent Amos Harel wrote on page one of the independent, left-leaning HaQaretz (3/10): QDefense Minister Ehud Barak timed his visit to the Shalits' protest tent yesterday to coincide with the evening news broadcast. That visit is as close as Barak has gotten in expressing public support for paying what Hamas is demanding: the release of 450 serious offenders in exchange for the abducted soldier Gilad Shalit.... If there are no dramatic last-minute moves, the Olmert government will dissolve before the cabinet even sees which prisoners Hamas is demanding. The group is insisting on the overwhelming majority of those prisoners. Israel must decide whether to accept the list, but as things stand now, it doesn't seem to intend even to discuss it.... [Olmert's] successor, Benjamin Netanyahu, will be even less committed to Gilad's fate. After all, the soldier wasn't abducted on his watch. As head of a narrow, right-wing government, Netanyahu will also have trouble concluding a deal that demands such great concessions.

II. QSalam Fayyad's Resignation

Former Meretz leader Dr. Yossi Beilin wrote in the independent Israel Hayom (3/10): QIn contrast to many of his colleagues, [outgoing Palestinian Prime Minister Salam Fayyad] is always

cautious not to blame Israel for everything.... Fayyad is one of the only people who knew what to ask of Israel and of the world, and how to get it.... Hamas does not forgive him for his good relations with the Americans, the Israelis, and the world, and he himself, three years ago, became caught up in forming a new social-democratic party that did not win more than three seats out of 128-which quickly put him back in being in the position of not belonging to any party. There are threats to his life, there is criticism of various franchise holders for his QdryingQ them up after poring seriously over the account books of the PA and discovering worrisome corruption reservoirs. The temptation to go into academia, into business, or to return to the U.S., was enormous for him. But it is not only the Palestinians who will pay the price for his leaving.

III. "We Showed Them"

Liberal columnist Prof. Aviad Kleinberg wrote in the mass-circulation, pluralist Yediot Aharonot (3/10): Q[Through their votes,] the Israelis wished to show their might to the Arabs, and at the same time to reach some arrangement that would dispense us from being so busy with them.... The true makeover of the recent elections was not the rise of the Right, but the Israeli middle classQs turning away from the parties that represented it over the past decades -Q Labor and Meretz. Labor was punished for not being fuzzy enough and Meretz for being too fuzzy. Israel is desperately in need of a voice that it gave up in the last elections, a voice that would demand serious criticism of the defense establishment and its brawny way of thinking that has become the national religion, a voice that would again demand the insertion of social considerations in the order of national priorities. Israel urgently needs the offended to abandon their domestic fights, to get rid of those trying to maintain the old order, to merge forces, and offer Israel a real alternative.

12. Iran:

Summary:

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz: QEspecially now, when it seems we are on our way to a narrow and extreme coalition, it is important for Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu to be cautious and more aware of the limitations of Israel's power.

Block Quotes:

"DonQt Jump In Headfirst"

Senior columnist and longtime dove Yoel Marcus wrote in the independent, left-leaning Ha'aretz (3/10): QWe are prattling on too much about the Iranian threat. If jabbering could kill, no doubt we would have been at war with Iran long ago.... With unnecessary talk we burden ourselves with the Iranian threat and make it easier for countries that do not want to get involved, former Israel Air Force chief Eitan Ben-Eliyahu said. The risk to Europe and to American interests in moderate Islamic countries in our region is no greater than the risk to Israel. It is no coincidence that one of the first acts of President Obama was to propose to Russia's Putin: We will not place missiles in Eastern Europe and you will stop assisting Iran.... Especially now, when it seems we are on our way to a narrow and extreme coalition, it is important for Prime Minister-designate Benjamin Netanyahu to be cautious and more aware of the limitations of Israel's power. Don't prattle on and don't jump in headfirst.

13. Muslims in European Society:

Summary:

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv: QThere is no connection between last SaturdayQs violence [outside MalmoQs tennis courts] and QIsraeli policy in GazaQ.... This is SwedenQs problem, EuropeQs problem.

Block Quotes:

"Because They Are Fanatics"

Conservative Op-Ed Page Editor Ben-Dror Yemini wrote in the popular, pluralist Maariv (3/10): QA recent study indicates increasing Islamization among MalmoQs Muslims. A violent minority has taken over.... In Malmo, but not only there, radicals rule under the cover of openness and enlightenment. The Islamists find allies among the radical Left. Any argument, including that study, is countered by claims against QIslamophobia.Q It is not that Israel is the victim of that crazy coalition of radicals -Q not at all. In general, the victims are young Muslim women who are forced to marry against their will with a cousin who needs a Swedish visa.... [Such a woman] was murdered by her father and brother. It would have been the fate of the Israeli tennis players, had the demonstrators been given that chance. Thus there is no connection between last SaturdayQs violence and QIsraeli policy in GazaQ -Q none whatsoever. This is SwedenQs problem, EuropeQs problem. As long as various Qexperts continue to nurture the most perverted version of Qmulticulturalism,Q which turns women into victims, and progressive people continue to encourage hatred of Israel, the result will be comparable.

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